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"THE NEMESIS OF FORGETTING HOW TO BE SOLDIERS AND HOW TO HONOR THEM"

A SERMON

BY

JOHN MALICK

PULPIT
FIRST UNITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL
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REV. GEORGE A. THAYER, D. D., *Pastor Emeritus*
REV. JOHN MALICK, *Minister*

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"THE NEMESIS OF FORGETTING HOW TO BE SOLDIERS AND HOW TO HONOR THEM,"

Being the fourth in a series of four sermons on,

"GOD'S REVELATION OF FACT IN HUMAN HISTORY"

I "The Dread Responsibility of Ascent."
II "The Saving Remnant."
III "The Myth of the Melting-Pot."
IV "The Nemesis of Forgetting How to Be Soldiers and How to Honor Them."

"THE NEMESIS OF FORGETTING HOW TO BE SOLDIERS AND HOW TO HONOR THEM"

THERE is among equitably minded people a feeling of discomfort at not being able to pay their share. There is after every war something of this feeling among the whole and the healthy. It is a little sense of shame at being so comfortably alive and unbroken.

It is all the more uncomfortable because we know that our being here whole and in health is from no merit of our own, and others not being here, or being here broken, is from no demerit of theirs. It is all the more embarrassing because we know that neither our happier fate nor their unhappier lot is the proper wages of desert, but, just a turn of the fortune wheel of circumstance which made them by reason of their age and strength the burden bearers of their generation and others by reason of age and circumstance the favored and the sheltered.

This all gives the feeling that Saul had, when all his men and his sons had fallen and he alone was left, the feeling of shame at being alive: "Slay me, for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me."

In the old days of war, when those who went out shared the spoil, the difficulty then seemed to be to make those who stayed at home feel that they had been equitably treated. We read of certain base

fellows who said to David, "Because they went not with us to the battle we will not give them aught of the spoil that we have recovered." And David had to rule, "For as his share is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his share be that tarrieth by the baggage; they shall share alike."

This is not our difficulty. In modern times the preponderance of benefit is with those who tarry by the luggage. Their safety, their rewards in gain and wage, in comfortable living, all the benefit, is with those who tarry behind. Our difficulty is to make it up even decently to those who go down to the battle. With all that we ever can do, they are the great givers and those who tarry back are the great receivers. As David, we too are always looking about for someone to thank; asking, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? And they answered him, Jonathan hath yet a son who is lame of his feet."

So far as our shame at being such large and unbroken sharers can be eased, and our gratitude expressed, it has to be expressed to our time and to those ahead of us. Our debt is to the past but we cannot pay it where it is due. There is no one to receive it if we should be moved to pay. Debts are to the past but they have to be paid to the future.

We do not know what is coming in the next hundred years. War, at its best, the only kind that is ever justified, is but the extension to large affairs

of a principle which is used in every home and school and by all officers of the law. It is compelling some to do what they should do, and will not do, or to cease doing what they insist on doing and should not. One who feels confident that there are no groups of human kind within civilized countries, or around the borders, that may not have to be coerced in the next hundred years, is certainly a cheerful optimist. Perhaps the past century of our nation is no criterion of what the next will be, but, we just recall it for what it is worth.

In the one hundred and thirty-eight years of our national life, up to 1914, we have had ten wars, more or less considerable, that is, one every fourteen years. Adding the minor Indian disturbances we have had, since 1860, not counting the last, about forty disturbances which required the use of an army, that is one every year and one-half.

We have as a nation a military history and we have certain traditions about it. Let us glance at these. We have been fortunate in our friends so that we have never had to match ourselves alone against a first class power. Our enemies numerically have never been very large. The most striking thing in our military history is the number of men we have required to do what we have done, compared with the number of those who have opposed us. Our record up to the Spanish War was that we never had less than two men for the enemy's one. For the larger wars it has run two to one; eight to

one; twenty-two to one; seven to one; two and one-half to one, up to the Spanish War when it was about man for man. Speaking generally we have been discouragingly defeated at the beginning of each war and have had a large number of cases of breaking down of morale, resulting in confusion, in running away, in mutiny and in desertion. About twelve such cases are recorded each in the Revolution and in the War of 1812. In the Civil War our desertions were 500,000 in an army of 2,500,000, or about one desertion to every five men.

As a people, along with this history, we have had certain traditions. One of our traditions is that an army is a particularly dangerous thing to have around and a menace to the people's liberty. Another tradition is that a citizen soldiery, which leaves the plow in the furrow and shoulders a gun, is the bulwark for the people and a sure defense against all possible dangers. These traditions grew up in the American Revolution, beginning first at Bunker Hill where the invincible citizen soldier idea got its start. The strength of Bunker Hill was in the veteran leaders, military men who knew how to build entrenchments and to direct raw troops. This great fact was lost sight of and popular oratory built up the great American doctrine, the sufficiency of, and invincibility of, a citizen soldiery drawn in a day from domestic pursuits to the country's defense. This tradition for a hundred years moulded our

policy about an army, always against the protest of those who knew the facts.

This has been the system beginning with the Revolution. When the urgent need was immediately at hand the call went out for men. Some men came, the best men. It was a selective process. Men were asked to volunteer, and some did. They volunteered for short terms. Then about the time a crisis arrived their short terms expired, and the result was national humiliation and defeat. Those who volunteered have never been enough, then they were bought. Bounty-giving introduced commercialism to take the place of obligation to the nation in its hour of need, and bounty-giving led to desertion and re-enlistment to get another bounty. Then, in the critical hour, when these had all failed to produce enough men, conscription, the demand upon all.

After each war, after all this experience that was so deadly, those who knew the lesson, begged and beseeched that this experience should be for profit to the nation and that never again would the nation repeat the error.

Let us see how it works. When the need arises we go out for men to do something for us. We have needed them in a fairly large way every ten years in our history and every year and a half in some kind of war, large or small. We take men from what they know how to do and ask them to do what they have not the faintest conception how to do. In

every case we have taken many more men than were needed and thrown them at once into the nation's battles. Living in camps, which are confusion because of the suddenness of the emergency, subject to the deadly ills of camp and transportation, and in the face of the enemy fire, we always have made our soldiers learn the art of war. We always have persisted in making our citizens learn how to defend under the most costly and deadly conditions. With the enemy shooting real bullets at them we have made them learn what they could have learned, ought to have learned, in safe fields with blank cartridges. That is, what all citizens ought to learn in safety, in healthful camps and sun-lit training places, we have made them get in the first years of war itself. With what result? With the humiliation of lost engagements, with peril to the nation, and, what is worse, and unpardonable, the subjection of needlessly large bodies of men to the perils of camp and battle line. Added to this is the appalling loss of life and the staggering burden of pension support for the next two generations.

It is the uniform testimony of those who know that the bravest of men individually are helpless in companies unless they have been trained to act together in the face of danger and to move as one in an emergency, and, that any part of the company that is put to confusion breaks the morale of all. Bull Run had the bravest of men, individually of the highest excellence, but the lack was this indispen-

sable training of men to act as a body in the face of danger. This holocaust of human life, with crowds of men, often two to every one of the enemy in our wars, this came not from the cowardice of men but from the iniquity of a system. It took two years in the Civil War under enemy fire to learn what every citizen ought to have learned safely in peace in quiet resting places. Literally thousands died who need not have died, in fact need not have been in war at all, if trained men had been at hand to do it.

We have put this necessity upon men and the men who have done it for us have crystallized out of it all this bit of experience which ought to be hung in every school at the side of the Gettysburg Address, and be absorbed into the mental system of every mother's son: "A government is the murderer of its own citizens which sends them to the field uninformed and untaught."

After every experience the entire army has had to be demobilized for lack of a public sentiment that would frame legislation and vote money to keep even a nucleus to lead and train in time of peace. With the result that when the need arose again we had no added strength, and were in no sense wiser, or better prepared, as a result of our previous experience and folly.

Those who know have made these observations which historically cannot be challenged. A people who will not prepare in time of peace will have

these three results when faced with a national danger:

(a) They will have appalling and needless loss of life.

(b) They will have unlimited waste of money.

(c) They will have at the outset national anxiety and humiliation.

The crux of the thing is its inhumanity, its deadliness, and its cost. That more men are put into danger, and that they are put into the maximum amount of danger, because unprepared either in body or mind for either camp or battle, that is the great matter, for it is the destruction of irrecoverable and irreplaceable values, a nation's stock, for war takes the top of the human pyramid.

The cost is secondary but it is a resulting burden on life. It is not that we have not spent enough. Seven billion dollars is the expenditure up to 1914. We have spent enough, and more than enough, but we have not spent it at the right time. We have spent it in the hurried confusion of war itself because we would not spend it before. It was good money thrown to a bad system. The money that would not be voted to give to all men in peace time what they should have had, was poured out like water when the need arose, and afterward to care for the wounded and dependent which were at the maximum because the training was denied. It is the best judgment of those who know, that the grand total could have been much less by spending

regularly through the years on the manly art of national defense, rather than in great sums in the face of immediate peril.

What is the chief source of the difficulty? It is following persistently those who know nothing about it and disregarding those who do. We put the burden of the job on one group of men when we are in danger, men who know how to conduct this terrible business, then, as soon as the danger is over, we damn them with faint praise; impugn their motives; disregard their counsel and follow the advice of those who do not know anything about war and have small part in it. That is, we are saved by one group of men, then, we follow until the next time of peril the fluent counsel of another group. From Washington on we have disregarded the counsel of those who know, and always with the same result. We have listened to the wrong people, and then we have put the whole deadly business, when it came, upon the shoulders of those to whom we would not listen in years of peace.

Our national tradition is that an untrained citizen soldiery is an adequate defense, safe for themselves and sufficient for the country. It has no history to support it. It is deadly for the citizen soldiery and weak and uncertain as a national defense. Jefferson caught the popular ear rather than Washington and it started the tradition on its way. Jefferson's first message dealt with the superfluous size of the army. He told his countrymen that the

only dependable force is a body of neighboring citizens in a militia. If he had been at Valley Forge with Washington he would have known better. When Jefferson was faced with responsibility he changed his counsel. If we are to take our national traditions from Jefferson, we ought to take his mature rather than his youthful and doctrinaire judgment. His mature judgment was that events had proved the necessity of obliging every citizen to be a soldier. "We must train and classify the whole of our male citizens and make military instructions a part of our collegiate education. We can never be safe until this is done."

The policy of having every citizen trained in peace time to defend his nation, or support any righteous cause, has numerous advantages in addition to these, that it makes national defense less deadly and less costly. It builds the individual morale by a discipline that puts the man in form; gives him that fine human art of getting along with, and acting with, his fellows. It puts a little measure of time to the service of his country; binds him to her cause and feeds the springs of affection for his nation. Then, with all this gain for himself and the morale of his country for peace, he has within his mind and written by habit in every muscle of his body what will serve all best in the hour of his country's need. The very fact of a great nation prepared for defense is itself a great moral force which would have prevented some of our wars,

shortened all and made everyone less deadly and costly.

We never have had a war party in fact. We have had those who have borne the brunt of defense in times of need who have urged us never to find ourselves placed in such helpless and costly confusion again if danger should arise. They have been, from Washington on, our best men and most anxious for peace, always, as no other men could be, because they know the tragedy of war. All they have asked is, that if we are to keep on calling upon them to do this business for us every few years, we make it possible for them to do it with some order and effectiveness. War parties have not forced us into any war that we have had.

The best political platform in time of peace is one that sets out the cunning designs of a war party. Those who wish to catch the popular ear cannot do it better than by holding up to scorn the iniquities of a war party in unholy alliance with the forces of mammon. It makes a good story for popular consumption. It catches the foreign vote, fearful of a military establishment. It catches the base of the human pyramid, for it is citizenship without obligation, a great country to live in without anything required. Conscription is fought worst in the slums. Anything that means exemption and all the privileges and no duties, that is always appealing. The war party is represented as the great dragon and the vote seeker is the Sir Gala-

had come to save the people. Clothe this in the altruistic language of demagogism, of peace, of humanity, and of good will; add to this the simulated sense of outraged virtue at seeing sons torn from their mothers and the mock heroics of popular messiahs come to save them from such a fate, and we have the answer why we have done as we have done. It is good political stuff to oppose before the people even that small outlay that would be required to prepare every man for his country's service. Then, it is equally a part of this same popular leadership to dip deep and often into the public treasury after war, to care for the multitude of the maimed which is swelled tragically by the unprepared confusion for which this same popular leadership is responsible.

The hard fact of the matter is that more graves are decorated every year of those who died needlessly before their time because we followed the short sighted policy of peace parties and of popular leaders, than of those who died because we followed the counsel of war parties. We should not blink the fact that they died from conditions that humane foresightedness could have diminished if not have prevented.

To those who always have prevented prudent readiness is to be credited often good intent and some lifting of the vision of a better world. Against them is to be charged some of our national crimes. We give them credit for some of our progress. We

hold them responsible for what a great, rich and resourceful nation could easily have prevented. The thousands of deaths from sickness in the Spanish War; the amazing dearth of healing supplies; the confusion of concentration and transportation; the lack of trained men to lead and direct, leaving men helpless without necessary officers, all these things, which have happened, are properly chargeable against those who made it impossible for us to be humanely foresighted.

One of the best signs of health and wisdom in us today is that now we are gathering our men into summer training camps. These should have in them all who can go, better if all could go. It is greatly conceived and should have the country's undivided support.

That forearmed for any evil is forecommitted and foredoomed to that evil, we cannot believe. That the presence of a whole citizenship ready for what might come, is itself a force to make it come; that men make the opportunity to use the skill and means of defense that they have perfected, is hard to believe in our country. We should believe as readily that those who take out a policy at the window before they start on a journey just naturally have a tendency to wreck the train, or that the likelihood of one being injured is much increased by the presence of a first-aid package in his grip.

That those upon whom we put the burden of

doing these things, that military people are just naturally quarrelsome and trouble making, and trouble seeking, is not consistent with the facts among us. Those who have mingled much with military people testify that they are usually quiet and peaceable people, rather agreeable and easy to get along with. Those who have mingled much with those who like to be known as peaceable people testify that though with different weapons they are often exceedingly warlike. It has been observed that earth hath no fury like that of a non-combatant. Upon some, at times, we put the heavy task of getting us out of the results of our accumulated sins of omission and commission. With the result that they get the reputation of being disagreeable brutes while the rest of us sit by enjoying the reputation of being saintly idealists.

We have no need of a peace party or a war party. We have great need of a part of hard-headed common sense which will face the facts of life and the clear-cut counsel of our own national history.

The body of a nation's manhood is the staying, directing, compelling hand though it wear the silken glove of courtesy and tenderness. It is the hand within the silken glove of diplomacy which gives to all covenants and agreements their only strength and assurance until the practice of virtue and honesty becomes a confirmed habit of the race.